

October 30, 2003

Name

Address

Re: Water Softeners and Septic Systems

Dear ____:

I am asking for your help in a non-scientific survey that I am conducting regarding the effects of water softeners on standard septic systems in Montana. The DEQ is considering making a revision to the language in Circular DEQ-4 that currently prohibits water softener backwash to septic tanks (DEQ-4, Section 7.1). However, before we propose any changes to the circular, we would like to have a better understanding as to the true nature and extent of any problems that water softeners may be causing.

I would like to know whether or not you have documented any septic system failures in your county/region that are directly attributable to water softener backwash. If so, I would like your best guess as to the percentage of failures due to water softeners out of the total number of system failures that occur in your area. I would then like your best guess as to the percentage of failures due to water softeners out of the total number of septic systems operating in your area. Lastly, I would like to know if the system failures that were attributable to water softener backwash were due to either hydraulic loading or due to loss of permeability in clayey soils present beneath the drainfield.

Your input is greatly appreciated and it will help us make a more informed decision on how best to manage water softener backwash in Montana. You can send me a quick response via email at: rlazuk@state.mt.us, or feel free to call me at (406) 444-3638. Even if you have no documented failures, I would be interested in any thoughts you have on this issue in general. If you do not respond to this letter, we will assume that there are no problems with septic system failure due to water softeners in your area of the state. Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely,

Raymond Lazuk
Supervisor, Subdivision Review Section